

these things down seems to have weakened, and the id seems to have strengthened.

We cannot lose for a moment our vigilance against these forces of hate, intolerance, bigotry, and discrimination.

I love the Asian American community. They have done so much for America. I see it in my borough of Brooklyn, in my city and State of New York, and throughout the country—hard-working people, people who do so much for our country at every level. They are welcome here. That is America. Yet, bigots have increased hate crimes and maybe even possibly led to the deaths of these people.

So I hope that all Americans first will realize that there is too much hate in the land, that hate against one group is hate against any group, and we should all, Americans of every background and race and creed, color, and religion, gender, and sexual orientation, band together against the haters. It is so un-American.

E pluribus unum—out of many, one. That is what America has always been. That is what America must continue to be, and our voices must speak out.

#### NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Second, on nominations, the Senate is once again making excellent progress this week confirming President Biden's nominees. We began the week by confirming a history-making Cabinet member, Interior Secretary Haaland. Yesterday, we confirmed Isabel Guzman as the SBA Administrator. Today, we will confirm another consequential administrative appointment, the U.S. Trade Representative.

President Biden has named Katherine Tai, the daughter of proud immigrants from Taiwan, a veteran of the Office of the Trade Representative under President Obama, and one of our country's most seasoned experts in international trade. That—Ms. Tai—is what America is all about.

We welcome her. We give her a great position of authority because of her expertise. And maybe—you know, I will leave it at that. It is a great contrast to the tragedy I was talking about a few minutes ago and the ascension of another proud American of Asian ancestry here.

As U.S. Trade Representative, Ms. Tai will play a crucial role in enforcing existing trade deals and making sure that American workers, businesses, and researchers can compete on a level playing field. She will be an essential player in restoring America's credibility with our trading partners and promoting international cooperation to tackle some of the world's biggest problems, from the global pandemic to climate change.

I have not a single doubt that Ms. Tai is the right person for the job, and I look forward to the Senate giving her a well-deserved promotion later today.

#### FOR THE PEOPLE ACT OF 2021

Mr. SCHUMER. Now on S. 1, democracy reform, today Senate Democrats are introducing the No. 1 bill of the 117th Congress, S. 1, to stand up to voter suppression, end dark money in politics, and reinvigorate American democracy in the 21st century.

Make no mistake, democracy reform must be a top priority of this Congress, and I will put S. 1, the For the People Act, on the floor of the Senate.

For too long, we have let really important parts of our democracy wither. Unlimited dark money flows into campaigns. Special interests have way too much influence in Washington. And worst of all, there is a concerted, nationwide effort to limit the right of American citizens, particularly people of color, to vote.

Throughout America's history, we have seen a continuous cycle of expansions in our democracy being met all too often by vehement backlash from those who wish to maintain an exclusionary status quo.

Earlier this year, we witnessed only the latest example in the form of a violent insurrection right here in this Chamber, right here in this Capitol, an attack fueled by the insidious lies of the former President aimed at overturning the results of a free and fair election.

In the wake of the November election, one of the safest and most secure in American history, dozens of Republican-led State legislatures have seized on the former President's big lie and introduced hundreds of bills aimed at tightening voting rules under the nasty guise—the nasty, malicious, and false guise—of election integrity. These bills, sadly, are aimed at Americans of color—Black Americans, Latinos, Native Americans.

Despicable efforts to target these historically disenfranchised communities have become a central component of the electoral strategy of one of America's major political parties. Shame on them. Shame. It is infuriating. Infuriating. When you lose an election, you are supposed to win over the people you lost, not stop them from voting. That is un-American, autocratic, and against the fundamentals of our democracy, but this is happening in States all across the country—all across the country.

Maybe the most reprehensible effort is underway in Georgia, where State Republicans are trying to limit absentee and mail-in voting, make it harder to post a ballot by drop box, and disallowing early voting on Sunday, a day when many churchgoing African Americans participate in voter drives. Does anyone on the other side of the aisle think taking away Sunday voting in Georgia is not bigoted? What is the rationale? Stop it, if you want to stand for equality and justice.

Our country has supposedly come a long way since African Americans in the South were forced to guess the number of jellybeans in a jar in order

to vote. But some of these voter suppression laws in Georgia and other Republican States smack of Jim Crow in the 21st century rearing its ugly head once again.

These laws and their various cousins in Republican State legislatures across the country are collectively one of the greatest threats to modern American democracy. According to a recent report in the Washington Post, these laws could strain every available method of voting for tens of millions of Americans, potentially amounting to the most sweeping contraction of ballot access in the United States since the end of Reconstruction, when Southern States curtailed the voting rights of formerly enslaved Black men.

If one party believes "heads we win; tails you cheated"; if one political party believes that when you lose an election, the answer isn't to win more votes but, rather, to prevent the other side from voting, then we have serious and existential threats to our democracy on our hands.

This is no political dispute. It goes way beyond that to the core—the core—of what America is all about. That is why we need S. 1 so badly, a bill that would combat all of these voter suppression efforts by restoring critical parts of the Voting Rights Act; a bill that would make it easier, not harder, to vote by automatically registering American voters when they get a driver's license; a bill that would limit dark money and corruption in our politics and much more.

There are a lot of problems in our country—healthcare and climate change and income inequality—but we designed a democracy that would allow competing interests in our country to come together and agree on solutions. If our democracy doesn't work, we have no hope of solving any of our other problems.

S. 1 is going to be a top priority this Congress. We will fight and fight and fight to get this done legislatively. Failure is not an option. Too darn much is at stake.

#### AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021

Mr. SCHUMER. Now on the American Rescue Plan, I would like to continue shining a spotlight on different aspects of ARP. The legislation helped so many people and so much of the country, it is easy to forget many crucial parts of the bill. So later today, I will be joining my dear friend Representative VELÁZQUEZ from New York to talk about how the American Rescue Plan helps Puerto Rico, which is too often an afterthought in Federal legislation.

The American Rescue Plan will do three historic things for the people of Puerto Rico, American citizens all.

First, it will deliver Federal dollars to the island's earned income tax credit for low-wage workers for the first time ever.

Second, it will expand eligibility for residents to claim the child tax credit. Prior to the ARP, only families with three or more children in Puerto Rico could claim the child tax credit. Why those American citizens were treated differently than all the others was beyond me and strikes me as nasty. But now every family can.

Third, the ARP bill will add \$1 billion—\$1 billion—in food assistance. Residents of American territories don't receive traditional food assistance programs like those in the United States, such as the SNAP program, but instead their governments receive block grants that have been capped by the Federal Government.

The American Rescue Plan makes sure that Puerto Rico, which suffers devastating rates of poverty, 43 percent, and especially childhood poverty—an unacceptable 57 percent of all the children in Puerto Rico live in poverty. So we want to make sure that Puerto Rico receives its fair share of Federal food assistance.

The American Rescue Plan may be the greatest anti-poverty effort in a generation, and we make sure that Puerto Rico is part of it.

Now let me turn my attention to schools. One of most enduring images of the COVID-19 pandemic will be the empty classroom. For 12 months, teachers have done their level best to keep their students engaged with remote learning, but there have been incredible difficulties. Too many students don't have reliable internet. Too many parents can't be there to help young kids log on and keep up with their work. Simply put, there is no replacement for having kids in the classroom. We need to get our schools to reopen as quickly and as safely as possible.

Now, my Republican colleagues have made a lot of noise about reopening our schools, but they don't want to dedicate any resources to actually getting it done. We need money to do this. There are many more expenses under COVID.

Through the American Rescue Plan, Senate Democrats delivered the single largest investment in American education ever. We are proud of that. Proud. Let me say it again. Through the American Rescue Plan, Senate Democrats delivered the single largest investment in American education ever—ever—\$170 billion to repair the damage caused by this pandemic, three-quarters of which will go directly to K-12 education, prioritizing school districts that need it the most. This will help schools update ventilation, hire more nurses and janitors, make classroom sizes smaller, and make getting kids to and from school safe.

In short, the American Rescue Plan will greatly accelerate the safe and effective reopening of schools. Once kids are back in the classroom, the American Rescue Plan will help make sure they can stay there and succeed. After what has been a lost year for too many

students, this bill provides significant support for learning recovery programs—after-school programs, summer school programs, and other resources to help kids catch up and get back on track.

Through the American Rescue Plan, we have made a life-changing investment in our students. It is one of the many ways this bill will help us recover from the crisis and come back stronger than ever before.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### NOMINATION OF XAVIER BECERRA

Mr. McCONNELL. Last week, our Democratic colleagues had to resort to a rare tactic to rescue the stalled nomination of Xavier Becerra to run the Department of Health and Human Services.

The distinguishing feature of this nominee's resume is not his expertise in health, medicine, or administration. That part of the resume is very brief. What stands out are Mr. Becerra's commitments to partisan warfare and his far-left ideology.

He has supported the sweeping government takeover of healthcare they call "Medicare for All," which would actually end Medicare as we know it and would rip away families' private insurance plans.

As the administration's policies continue to create a border crisis, Mr. Becerra is someone who believes we should not just have blanket amnesty, but that entering the country illegally should not even be a crime.

And even amid a global pandemic, the most significant health-related experience on the nominee's record is his efforts to wield the legal system against religious Sisters to make them violate their faith and conscience.

Up to now, every person who has ever been confirmed as Secretary of Health and Human Services has either been favorably reported by the Finance Committee or discharged by unanimous consent. There is ample reason why this nominee would be a glaring exception.

I continue to urge a "no" vote.

#### NOMINATION OF KATHERINE C. TAI

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, fortunately, the Senate will first be confirming a thoroughly qualified nominee to be the new administration's top trade official.

Katherine Tai is just the kind of qualified and mainstream person who is positioned to serve President Biden

and the country quite well. That is why she received broad bipartisan support from the Finance Committee and why the vote to advance her nomination yesterday was 98 to 0.

I look forward to working with Ms. Tai to embrace trade and push back on abusive practices from China and other anticompetitive countries.

Trade is a huge strength of America. It drives job creation and economic growth. Just look at my home State, for example. Exports support more than 140,000 jobs in Kentucky. Hard-working Kentuckians supply nearly 200 countries with everything from agricultural goods to medicines, to aerospace parts and motor vehicles.

In the last Congress, we modernized our trade with our neighbors to the north and south through the USMCA. We gave Kentucky farmers, workers, and consumers a long-awaited boost.

But our job creators still face unfair barriers, including those targeting American spirits. The Bluegrass is proud to craft 95 percent of the world's bourbon, but, currently, tariffs put Kentucky distillers at a disadvantage in their largest export markets.

Ms. Tai should address these unfair international headwinds facing Kentuckians. I would encourage her to focus on expanding markets and reducing barriers for products and services from all 50 States.

Americans would welcome the growth in opportunity and prosperity. And, if you ask me, the whole world could benefit from a little more Kentucky bourbon.

#### CHINA

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, tomorrow, the Secretary of State and the President's National Security Advisor will have their first face-to-face meeting with Chinese officials. I am glad our officials met with regional allies like Japan and South Korea right beforehand and have been in touch with Australia and European allies as well. It is essential that we and our friends present a united front.

Now, the United States and the whole world need the President's team to deliver a strong message tomorrow.

During the campaign, President Biden spoke dismissively about the threat from China. But thus far, in office, his team has shown signs they understand that Communist China threatens America, our allies, and the prevailing international system.

The world spent years presuming that welcoming China into the international community would inevitably cause its rulers to play by the rules. Twenty years ago, President Clinton said: "[E]conomic innovation and political empowerment . . . will inevitably go hand in hand." But since then, rather than the rest of the world exporting liberty and transparency into China, Beijing has found more success exporting authoritarianism and corruption beyond its borders.